

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 05675 042206Z  
ACTION SPTA-02

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SS-15 SP-02 INR-10 L-03

EB-08 SIL-01 PA-01 /053 W

-----103802 051936Z /64

R 042159Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8319

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PN, PQ

SUBJ: REACTION TO AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO ESCOBAR

REF: A. PANAMA 5542, B. ICA/PANAMA 5605

1. THERE HAS BEEN NO OFFICIAL REACTION TO AMB. JORDEN'S LETTER TO DR. ROMULO ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT (REF B), TAKING THE LATTER TO TASK FOR IRRESPONSIBLE STATEMENTS IN HIS RECENT MEETING WITH PANCANAL PANAMANIAN WORKERS (REF A).

2. PANAMA CITY DAILY "CRITICA", GENERALLY REGARDED AS REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LEFT WING, RAN A FRONT-PAGE NEWS STORY AUG 4, INTERVIEWING AN ALLEGED CANAL ZONE TAXI DRIVER WHO CONFIRMED THAT YES, INDEED, THERE WAS "SOMETHING BRUTAL" GOING ON AGAINST PANAMA. THIS CONSISTED, HE CLAIMED, OF VARIOUS STRATEGIES BY WHICH TOURISTS AND SHIPS' CREWS WERE DISCOURAGED FROM LANDING AND SPENDING THEIR MONEY IN PANAMA. THE WITNESS WAS NOT VERY PERSUASIVE, AND HIS REMARKS DID NOT IN ANY CASE BEAR ON ESCOBAR'S MAIN POINTS.

3. ELSEWHERE, INDEPENDENT RADIO STATION "MIA" ON AUG 3 READ THE AMBASSADOR'S STATEMENT ON THE AIR, WITH GLEEFUL COMMENTS SUCH AS "WHAT A THRASHING" AND "HE IS REALLY

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TANNING HIS HIDE". TERMING ESCOBAR'S STATEMENTS A "BLUNDER", THE RADIO COMMENTATOR NOTED THAT IN MOST COUNTRIES THE AUTHOR OF SUCH AN ACTION WOULD BE DISMISSED. ON THE SAME DATE RADIO "HOGAR" HELD A PANEL DISCUSSION, DURING WHICH ESCOBAR WAS TERMED "INCOHERENT" AND A MAN WHO DOES NOT "RESPECT PRINCIPLES"; ONE PARTICIPANT REGRETTED THAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD "SCOLDED ONE OF OUR

OFFICIALS".

4. COMMENT: ESCOBAR IS NOT VERY POPULAR IN SOME GOVT CIRCLES, AND A GOOD NUMBER OF HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE TOLD US PRIVATELY THEY ARE LESS THAN SORRY TO SEE HIM EMBARRASSED. EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ESCOBAR IS GIVEN TO OUTRAGEOUS OUTBURSTS FROM TIME TO TIME. WE ARE HOPEFUL THAT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF THE CURRENT FLAP WILL BE FAVORABLE, BY IMPRESSING UPON HIM AND OTHERS SO INCLINED THAT THIS SORT OF OPPORTUNISTIC PROPAGANDA BLAST AGAINST THE UNITED STATES IS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE. WE ARE DOUBTFUL THERE WILL BE ANY LONG-TERM BAD EFFECTS. JORDEN

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NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** SABOTAGE, NEWS MEDIA COMMENTS, PUBLIC ATTITUDES, DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, ALLEGATIONS, CANALS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 04 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
**Film Number:** D780321-1188  
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**Office:** ACTION SPTA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
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**Reference:** 78 PANAMA 5542  
**Retention:** 0  
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**Review Content Flags:**  
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**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
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**Review Release Event:** n/a  
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**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** REACTION TO AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO ESCOBAR  
**TAGS:** ELAB, SOPN, PN, PQ, US, (JORDEN, WILLIAM J), (ESCOBAR BETHANCOURT, ROMULO)  
**To:** STATE  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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